

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

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R 281040Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6501

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BENC, ELAB, MR

SUBJECT: LANG/PRITCHARD SUGAR REFINERY PROJECT

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 2551, (B) STATE 260392

1. LANG ENGINEERING CORP. VP MARRULLIER, VP JENNINGS AND LOCAL CONSTRUCTION MANAGER TATE CALLED ON AMBASSADOR AND DCM OCTOBER 21. MARRULLIER DID MOST OF TALKING FOR LANG DURING RELATIVELY BRIEF MEETING. HE EMPHASIZED THE POSITIVE, AND AT NO TIME ALLUDED TO PROBLEMS CITED REF A. MARRULLIER GAVE US IMPRESSION THAT PROJECT IS PROGRESSING WELL. JENNINGS ACKNOW-

GDGED IN ONE SENTENCE THAT L/P HAD BEEN EXPERIENCING SOME MINOR OPERATIONAL AND PERSONNEL PROBLEMS, BUT BRUSHED THEM ASIDE AS ROUTINE AND COMMON TO ALL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. DURING SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH DCM, TATE SAID MARRULLIER MET WITH GIRMA MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MINES WOULD RAGEL ON OCTOBER 23. ALTHOUGH TATE DID NOT OFFER ANY DETAILS ON MEETING, HE SAID MARRULLIER AND MINISTER PRETTY MUCH AGREED THERE WILL BE NO OFFICIAL OPENING OF SUGAR REFINERY ON MAURITANIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY (NOVEMBER 28).

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2. COMMENT: WE DETECT CHANGE OF ATTITUDE ON PART LANG ENGINEERING CORP. TOWARD USG AS EVIDENCED BY SOMEWHAT FROSTY RESPONSE FROM OLIPHANT REPORTED REF (B) AND BY LESS THAN FORTHCOMING SESSION WE HAD IN NOUAKCHOTT WITH MARRULLIER AND JENNINGS. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT SUGAR REFINERY PROJECT IS STILL CONFRONTED WITH HOST OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN SPITE OF LACK OF DESIRE BY LANG SENIOR MANAGEMENT TO DISCUSS THEM. AS NOTED REF A, PROJECT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO LOSE MONEY FOR COMPANY AND COMPLETION DATE IS STILL UNKNOWN. FINAL LANG/GIRM ACCOUNTING WHICH WAS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT EXERCISE UNDER BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND WITH BEST OF GOODWILL ON BOTH SIDES, COULD TURN INTO PROLONGED NEGOTIATING CONFRONTATION IF CLEAN NEW BROOM NOW SWEEPING THROUGH LANG/PRITCHARD EXECUTIVE OFFICES AND CONSTRUCTION SITE SUCCEEDS IN POLLUTING ATMOSPHERE OR UNDERMINING MUTUAL CONFIDENCE WHICH WAS BUILT UP SO PAINFULLY AFTER INITIAL THIRTY MONTHS OF INSENSITIVITY, INACTION AND INCOMPETENCE. WE SUSPECT ATTITUDINAL CHAGE WHICH WE PERCEIVE IS DUE TO DEPARTURE OF ISC CHAIRMAN GOLDY WHO TOOK SPECIAL INTEREST IN MAURITANIAN PROJECT AND IN YOUNG GIRM MANAGERS. WE HOPE OUR CONJRNS FOR FUTURE ARE UNFOUNDED, AND THAT SUGAR REFINERY PROJECT IN MAURITANIA IS NOT GOING TO LEAVE BEHIND LEGACY OF PROBLEMS AND SOILED REPUTATION OF VARIETY LANG REPORT-EDLY BEQUEATHED TO HOST GOVERNMENT AND US MISSION ON SIMILAR SUGAR PROJECT IN IVORY COAST. HANDYSIDE

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